

POLITICS AND MORALS

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ideals for his subjects and mankind. The influence of Mme de Kriidener gave a religious turn to his thoughts, and when the struggle with Napoleon was over he saw his chance. Here is the preamble of the Holy Alliance signed in September 1815. " Their Majesties the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Russia having, in consequence of the great events which have occurred in the course of the last three years in Europe, and especially of blessings which it has pleased Divine Providence to shower down upon those states which place their confidence and their hope on it alone, acquired the intimate conviction of the necessity of settling the steps to be observed by the Powers in their reciprocal relations upon the sublime truths which the holy religion of our Saviour teaches ; they solemnly declare that the present Act has no other object than to publish in the face of the whole world their fixed resolution, both in the administration of their respective states and in their political relations with every other government, to take for their sole guide the precepts of that holy religion." The first article pledged the signatories to mutual assistance and to the spirit of fraternity for the protection of religion, peace and justice. In the second they proclaimed themselves members of a single Christian nation delegated by Providence to govern three branches of the one family.

England stood aloof from what Castlereagh contemptuously described as " sublime mysticism and nonsense," but most of the other European rulers acceded to the pact. Working through the conference system, in which* England took her share, the conquerors of Napoleon, soon reinforced by France herself, ruled the Continent for a few years by the first and

last effective Concert it has known. The idea was sound enough, but the conception of its duties was too static. Obsessed by the spectre of revolution the crowned autocrats, under Metternich's leadership, attempted to stifle the forces of constitutional government and nationality, and within a decade their disagreements brought, the experiment to an end. England withdrew when France received a mandate to restore autocracy in Spain, and the Greek war of independence drove a wedge between Russia and Austria. The so-called Concert of Europe, which was often talked of and occasionally employed in the second half of the nineteenth century, only attempted to deal with the Eastern question, and even in this limited area it conspicuously failed. It was a tragedy that the*